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1st April, 2021

Submission Interim Report to the Australian Government Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process

I'm writing in support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart¹ and in support of a Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution.

The roadmap set forth by the Uluru Statement from the Heart provides a significant opportunity for healing and connection, not only in our country, but also as a step forward as a global community. The direction outlined by the Uluru Statement will open paths of respect for First Nations peoples in our country, as well as provide a space for openness and reconciliation between all Australians. The direction outlined also has the potential to support the much needed sharing of knowledge and affirmative, heart-driven action on many pressing issues, at environmental, social and economic levels, which can come about when we work together with the insight and understanding of our First Nations cultures.

Constitutional enshrinement of a First Nations Voice is the only form of recognition that has the collective endorsement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. A First Nations Voice, enshrined in the constitution, has overwhelming support amongst the Australian voting public, with 86% of the general community supporting the establishment of a representative Indigenous body and 81% stating that this should be protected within the constitution.² A First Nations Voice, protected by Constitution, is a commitment to a respectful and sustainable relationship with the First Nations people of our country.

As Australians - as people who have had the opportunity to live in one of the most beautiful places of the world - we owe a debt of gratitude to our First Nations People; for it's their insight, traditional laws and cultural understanding, which has protected and managed the flora and fauna, rivers, forests, lakes and seas, of this continent, up until the invasion of European settlers. The wars which were then waged upon the First Nations peoples, the massacres which occurred, the taking of everything from the existing Nations and the self-aggrandising of the 'explorers' and 'conquerors' which followed, is nothing but heartbreaking. And, undeniably, the impact of these atrocities is still being felt and the injustices continue. This is not a history any nation wishes to revisit or integrate into the narrative of who they are, however, without acknowledgement of this history we cannot move forward, nor

can we begin to remedy the present, for both First Nations peoples and all people now living in this country.

It's time that we begin to create our own narrative as a modern nation, one which has the strength to own the legacy of its violent history and at the same time, forge a future built upon respect, truth and peace. We want to be able to tell a story which has a turning point, which has a next phase which we can begin to be proud of, in and which we can share with our children without causing ongoing heartache.

To re-emphasise, in support of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and in support of a Voice protected in the constitution, I call on the Government to:

- Honour its election commitment to a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled;
- Once a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament, enable legislation for the Voice;
- Ensure that the membership model for the National Voice must allow previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

I believe this is a positive way to move forward for all Australians.

Sincerely,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Alia Harvie.

Alia Harvie